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Ben Jervis

Middens, Memory and the Effect of Waste: Beyond symbolic meaning in archaeological deposits. An early medieval case study¹.

Abstract

Building upon the debate published in volume 19 of *Archaeological Dialogues*, this contribution explores how rather than seeing deposits as meaningful, we can move to explore the processes through which things and spaces become waste and the broader social effects of these processes in relation to elements of identity and sense of place. An extended case study of depositional practice in the early medieval settlement of Hamwic (Southampton, UK) is presented, to demonstrate how depositional practice caused waste, people and spaces to develop particular meaning in the emergence of an urban settlement and served as a medium for the negotiation of continuity and change in the lives of the settlement and its inhabitants.

Key Words

Structured deposition, Biography, Anglo-Saxon, Special deposits, Rubbish, Technologies of Remembrance

Introduction

A series of contributions in volume 19(2) of *Archaeological Dialogues* debated the utility and nature of the concept of structured deposition. Critiquing the concept within British prehistory Garrow (2012a) argued against the assumption that all structure in deposition relates to symbolic meanings, either of objects or places, and in particular argued for a contrast to be drawn between ‘odd deposits’, which might be considered the result of explicit ‘ritual’ action and ‘material culture patterning’, which may be the result of regulated deposition, but is more likely to have been structured by the rhythms of everyday life. In response to this paper, Thomas (2012), one of the original proponents of the concept expressed concerns that such a view could return to a processual interpretation of waste, in which past lifeways can be simply ‘read off’ of the material, but also finds parallels between Garrow’s approach and the concept of *habitus*, in which deposition is the result of social practice within which the logic of action is situated. Indeed in his response, Garrow (2012b) makes the subtle point that meaning is situated in practice, rather than particular deposits being meaningful in themselves. Perhaps a more significant concern raised by Thomas (2012, 124) and Hansen (2012, 129) however is that what was originally a heuristic device has become an interpretation in itself. Garrow’s approach tempers this concern to some extent by seeking to understand what structures deposition, principally by associating the two ends of a spectrum of structure, ‘odd deposits’ and ‘material culture patterning’ as the result of activity ranging from ‘ritual’ to ‘mundane’. Berggren’s (2012) response highlights however that these categories of action can overlap and Brück’s (1999) work in particular demonstrates that activity which the modern analyst may identify as in some way unusual or special is likely to have been rational within the mindset of a past community, a realisation which has also been drawn from recent work examining devotional activity in later medieval and early post-medieval towns (Herva 2009; Hall 2011).

The concept of structured deposition has recently been the subject of debate within early medieval archaeology in Britain. Hamerow (2006) argued for the presence of ‘special deposits’ within early Anglo-Saxon settlements, principally related to the foundation or termination of structures. This work was critiqued by Morris and Jervis (2011) who argue, like Garrow, that such deposits need not be seen as specifically meaningful or the result of ‘ritual’ action. Indeed the term ‘ritual’ is equally unhelpful as ‘structured’ in interpretive terms, it can be considered a meta-level of interpretation. Ritual is not a uniform class of action, just as structured deposits are not a uniform class of deposits – ritual can be secular or religious, class or sex based, for example. Therefore the use of ritual, like the use of structured deposition, as an explanation, whilst not wrong, is uninformative (Morris and Jervis 2011, 70). In particular, Morris and Jervis question whether against a background of marked variability in depositional practice, it is possible to identify any deposits as intrinsically ‘special’ and adopt a

biographical approach to the formation of these deposits to explore the practices behind them and the ways in which they developed meaning. The utility of biography as a concept is raised by Chapman (2012) and Fontijn (2012) in their responses to Garrow's (2012a) paper, as well as by Garrow (2012b) in his reply. In this contribution I take this further by arguing that waste deposits are the product of the entanglement of human, material and deposit biographies, through which not only waste, but also people and places, become meaningful as well as maintain and shed this meaning. This is achieved through the discussion of a case study of deposition in the Anglo-Saxon settlement of Hamwic (Southampton, UK), which considers the agency behind and effect of depositional practices beyond the anthropocentric perspective promoted by a focus on the symbolic meaning and ritual/mundane character of particular practices.

Hamwic

The port of Hamwic was founded in the 6th century and was a forerunner to the modern city of Southampton (Fig. 1). It functioned as one of a network of trading centres, or wics, situated around the coast of northern Europe (see Hill and Cowie 2001 for an overview), declining in the 9th century (Hall 2000). The settlement has been subject to extensive excavations (Holdsworth 1980; Morton 1992; Andrews 1997; Birkbeck and Smith 2005; Stoodley 2012) which have revealed a formal street layout, evidence for the management of domestic spaces, intensive craft production and international trade. That the site was closely related to surrounding rural settlements is demonstrated by analysis of faunal remains, which show that animals were not bred in Hamwic, but brought 'on the hoof', through a tributary economic system (Bourdillon 1980, 185). The settlement appears to have developed from a royal centre (Morton 1992, 26), but it is likely that as it expanded its population was drawn from the surrounding countryside, although itinerant merchants and travellers also made up a significant component of this cosmopolitan, proto-urban community. The focus of the analysis of depositional activity presented here is the ceramic assemblage, some 45,000 sherds from 35 sites which have been the subject of several studies (Hodges 1981; Timby 1988; Jervis 2011). Three ceramic phases have been identified. In the earliest phase the main types in use are Organic-tempered wares, similar to those used at surrounding rural settlements (Jervis 2012). As the settlement became established a new type of pottery, Sandy Wares, were produced and used. These are distinctive as

similar types are not widely known from nearby rural sites. Finally, the latest phase of settlement activity is characterised by the presence of gritty wares, similar to those used at surrounding rural sites, and in the later Saxon settlement of Southampton founded on higher ground to the west. Throughout the ceramic sequence a range of imported wares, mostly from northern France and Flanders, are present. Due to the absence of vertical stratigraphic sequences close dating beyond this relative chronology remains problematic. Against this sequence however, it is possible to identify general trends in depositional practice within the settlement.

Through the analysis of levels of fragmentation (Orton, Tyers and Vince 1993, 167-71) and the identification of cross-fitting sherds between layers and features, it has been possible to build a detailed picture of depositional practice in Hamwic. Although the majority of pottery was recovered from cut features such as pits, discrete secondary deposits (as defined by Schiffer 1987), where material was deposited directly into a feature are comparatively rare, with the majority of deposits being tertiary (as defined by Schiffer 1987) in nature, meaning that they are the result of re-deposition from other features, most likely middens. Later use of this area of Southampton for agriculture, clay extraction and Victorian development have removed any trace of these positive features from the archaeological record, although a single midden base was identified in excavations at Melbourne Street (SOU 5²) (Cottrell 1980, 30). The evidence for middening largely comes from the presence of cross-fitting sherds between pits, in some cases up to 25m apart (Timby 1988, 119), indicating re-deposition from surface deposits. The high level of fragmentation also indicates that sherds were exposed on the surface for some time; in some features the average sherd weight is as low as 5g. Differences in the average sherd weight of different types of pottery, for example the identification of pits with highly fragmented phase 2 material (Sandy Wares) and less fragmented phase 3 material (gritty wares) at Chapel Road (SOU 11), may suggest that pits were filled with a mixture of secondary and tertiary material in some instances. Further evidence of re-deposition from tertiary deposits comes in the form of a pit at Six Dials (SOU 26; Pit 353) which exhibits reverse stratigraphy, with the latest material at the base, suggesting that it was filled from a surface deposit. Further examples of depositional practice are discussed in depth below. In general however, homogeneity of deposits, coupled with a high level of fragmentation and the presence of cross fitting sherds between pits, is suggestive of re-deposition from surface middens. This is supported by faunal remains, many of which exhibit gnawing and are extremely fragmented (Bourdillon unpub.), suggesting that these too spent time on the surface prior to deposition. Similar middening activity has been identified in mid-Saxon London (Lundenwic) (Malcolm et al 2003, 102) and also appears common at nearby rural sites such as Cowdery's Down (Millet and James 1983), where little material was recovered from cut

features, and settlements at Micheldever (Johnstone 1998, 88-9) and Riverdene (Hall-Torrence and Weaver 2003, 84), where the bulk of material recovered from the cut features appears to be re-deposited.

The generalisation that the majority of deposits are tertiary in nature masks the complexity of depositional activity in Hamwic however. Pits were dug for a variety of functions, as is demonstrated by variation in size and shape (Morton 1992, 42-3). Few, if any, were primarily receptacles for waste, rather they were dug as quarries, latrines, storage pits and to mark boundaries. With the exception of quarry pits, which were redundant once excavated, all had to be kept clear of waste to fulfil their function. Analysis of the filling of these features indicates a great deal of variability. Cess pits at Melbourne Street (SOU6), for example, appear to have been filled episodically, with layers having discrete ceramic assemblages and clear stratigraphic banding being visible. For example in pit 3 (Fig. 2), the primary deposit contained a mixture of soil and cess with little pottery (2 large sherds, probably contemporary with the deposit). This was sealed with a layer of brickearth soil, which may have contained some re-deposited pottery (3 small sherds). The feature was closed with a charcoal rich layer, followed by a dump of material which included pottery. Of this pottery earlier material was fragmented (average sherd weight 9g), whilst later material was more intact (average sherd weight 17g), suggesting that this feature may have been sealed by a mixture of re-deposited (supported by the presence of a sherd which cross-fits with another pit on the site) and secondary material. A range of other finds were also present in this final fill. The filling of this pit may relate to its history of use, with the cess layer being sealed for hygiene reasons (the charcoal perhaps being used to purify the deposit), with further banding perhaps indicating continued use or compensation for the slumping of earlier dumped material.

Pit alignments, dug as boundaries, functioned differently to cess pits and have distinctive depositional histories. Typically the lower fills contain few finds, with these perhaps forming slowly through processes of silting. Typically the ceramic assemblages from these features consist of low quantities of, often fragmented, pottery. The presence of cross fits between pits, suggests that this material accumulated as the remnants of surface deposits were swept into them. This can be seen, for example at Melbourne Street (SOU4), where contrasts can be drawn in the level of fragmentation between boundary pit alignments and pits dug for other functions, which were filled with dumped tertiary waste (Fig. 3). The upper fills of the boundary pits contain dumped secondary and tertiary material as these boundaries were closed as part of a process of spatial re-organisation in the final ceramic phase.

Despite the pre-dominance of tertiary deposits, a small number of secondary dumps have also been identified. The earliest occurrence is the filling of a *grubenhäus* (sunken featured building) at the periphery of the settlement. Such structures are common features of rural early- and mid- Saxon sites (5th-8th century), although their function remains a matter of debate (see Tipper 2004). Only two of these structures have been excavated in Hamwic, both at the periphery of the settlement and dating, based on ceramic evidence, to its earliest phase, suggesting that, at least in this phase, the fringe of the settlement had a semi-rural character, a notion supported by the recent excavations in the southern part of the settlement (Stoodley 2012). The deposit dumped into this feature includes joining sherds from 3 ceramic vessels, which display evidence of having been used in food preparation, as well as some more fragmented, probably tertiary, waste, likely derived from a midden (Fig. 4). Studies of *grubenhäuser* from elsewhere in England indicate that it is quite common for the fills of these structures to contain a mixture of tertiary and secondary waste (Tipper 2004, 159). A further unusual feature is a deep pit dug close to St Mary's Church (Fig. 5), the ecclesiastical centre of Hamwic (SOU 33, pit 8; see Morton 1992 Microfiche 1:G3). It contained a high quantity of pottery, principally in the form of secondary deposits, on the basis of the larger sherd size and the presence of cross-fitting sherds. It also contains a large quantity of animal bone. The lowest layer is characterised by the presence of cessy deposits. The feature appears to have been rapidly filled with pottery and animal bone, mixed with a small quantity of re-deposited material. It would appear that this pit contains the waste from a feast of some kind, perhaps a religious event given the pits proximity to a church. In both of these cases secondary deposition can be related to specific and rare events, the closure of a structure and the deposition of waste from a major event, which occurred outside of the ordinary rhythm of daily life in Hamwic.

The secondary deposits can perhaps be categorised as 'odd', in that they contrast the tertiary deposition which was undertaken across the settlement. The closure of the *grubenhäus* can be interpreted within its wider context as a fairly common occurrence, in which deposition marks a transition in the life of the settlement and its inhabitants, something which may also be true of the closure of the boundary pits identified at Melbourne Street. The link between secondary deposition and transition perhaps made the process of closure meaningful. Whilst arguably a deposit formed through a ritualised form of action, interpretation of such a feature as 'structured', 'special' or 'ritual' forces us to ignore the more mundane and functional need to close a disused feature, divorcing this action from everyday life (see also Garrow 2012, 97-8), but also failing to explore what the effect and broader role of this, potentially ritualised, action was. The deposit at SOU 33 is also 'odd', in that it is

quite different from anything else identified in the settlement. However, this characterisation must be tempered against the high level of variability identified within the settlement. Within Hamwic it has been possible to identify deposits at both ends of Garrow's (2012a) spectrum, odd deposits and material culture patterning, related to the function of specific features. That is not to say however, that the processes behind the patterning of material culture were not meaningful, however to see deposits as simply the result of habitual activity, appears unsatisfactory. Rather, we can explore how meaning emerged through the process of deposition, in particularly considering how waste and features came to afford deposition in particular ways, as the biographies of objects, people and features or spaces became entwined.

Biography, Affordances and Technologies of Remembrance

The majority of the material excavated from settlements of any date is waste. 'Special' deposits typically appear to contain material which had been deliberately selected for deposition; however even in their deposition these most likely underwent some form of transformation in meaning (see for example Morris 2011 on animal burials). Whilst waste can be satisfactorily defined as valueless and unwanted material, anthropological and sociological studies have demonstrated variability in how this categorisation is arrived at. Reno's (2009) study of the sociology of a contemporary landfill site demonstrates that people within the same society need not share the same conceptualisation of waste, with items being scavenged and re-used, a process through which objects are transformed from valueless to valuable, and through which complex identities are negotiated as people understand this activity either as creative or as an indication of poverty and deprivation. Furthermore, whilst one person may be satisfied that waste has been disposed of through dumping, it does not cease to have the potential to impact upon people. Edensor (2005) argues that whilst waste can lie latent in the background, it has the potential to re-enter social discourse as a potentially disruptive presence, for example as contamination on abandoned plot which is intended to be brought back into use. As valueless to the disposer, waste is a disruptive presence and the act of disposal can be seen as having a role in neutralising the disruptive power of waste. Past depositional action also guides practice and brings order through structure; in essence all but casual deposition is structured in some way, although

the rules and other considerations guiding this action may not be immediately apparent (Pollard 2001, 330; Brück 1999, 156).

The transition to waste is therefore not a linear transformation, but a complex process which can only be understood through close analysis. Such a perspective relates closely to the biographical approaches to material culture which developed through the last two decades (Gosden and Marshall 1999; Jones 2002; Mytum 2010; following Kopytoff 1986). Fundamental to these approaches is that the meaning of things changes throughout their lives as we relate to them in new ways, but the ways in which they become meaningful are limited by a number of factors, including their material properties and cultural knowledge. Two elements of such an approach are represented in Garrow's (2012b, 134-5) paper; that the pre-depositional lives of objects is an important consideration in understanding how they came to be deposited in particular ways, and that deposits need not be inherently meaningful, but rather that meaning emerges through the practice of deposition. As such, becoming waste is not only one phase in the lifecycle of material, but also of the places in which this material is dumped and in the lives of those who dispose of this material, or who engage with it and bring it 'back to life' as an item of value (potentially many centuries later as archaeological evidence; see Holtorf 2002).

We can consider therefore that things do not become valueless because they are waste, or indeed that they become waste because they are valueless, rather, through this process of transition they lose value and become re-categorised as waste simultaneously. The process of deposition is therefore effective, in that it causes material to be re-categorised, but also impacts upon the character of the place of deposition and the identities of those interacting with this rubbish. Rather than habitual action taking place within a social context, it is a process of entanglement of people, places and things, in which all of these actors shed and gain meaning, having a direct effect on the constitution of the social contexts, which can be considered to be formed through action, rather than being a backdrop against which it is situated (see Latour 2005, 159-62). In other words the challenge in exploring processes of deposition is to identify and articulate biographical motion, not by seeing the archaeological record as a materialisation of values and perceptions of the world, but by seeing deposition as a process through which these emerged, were enacted and maintained (Edensor 2005; Hill 1995, 126).

Various methodologies and metaphors have been employed to meet this challenge. Following Chapman (2000) it can be shown that the process of fragmentation leads to a process of accumulation (or assemblage) and that the associations formed create enchainment relationships. This is a useful metaphor, but the term enchainment implies a linear and logical formation of associations in the emergence of archaeological assemblages. These associations are messier however, formed of partial (in the sense that every actor is not connected to every other actor in a physical uniform way) connections between people, objects and the landscape, leading to the emergence of a varied assemblage which has multiple effects. An approach is required which acknowledges this messiness, that sees the archaeological assemblage as an entangled bundle of associations between human and non-human actors, in which associations can emerge and dissolve in a sometimes uncontrolled and unexpected manner (Knappett 2011, 213). Such an approach lies in seeing the archaeological assemblage as a process of assembly, rather than the pre-assembled, static group of objects which appears in the archaeologists report. Assembly draws together the objects we recover, but also their spatial context, people, objects which do not survive and the baggage located in the wealth of associations these individual actors have left in their wake. Deposits are phenomena with a variety of histories, the materials which make them up are drawn from multiple places and multiple times, forming a messy bundle of associations (Needham and Spence 1997, 79; Olsen 2010, 127). Furthermore, the meaning of these deposits is not inherent within them, but emerges through engagement (Needham and Spence 84-5; Hill 1995, 126; Edensor 2005, 317); they are assemblages in themselves, but are also part of a wider assemblage of physical and metaphorical connections which make up the world. We have the methodologies needed to understand these processes of assembly (Brudenell and Cooper 2008; Hill 1995; Sørensen 1996), but to apply these to debates about whether deposition is structured, ritualistic or functional misses the point; what we are seeking is to situate the emergence and treatment of waste within a wider social assemblage, to understand how it emerged and what it effects (Pollard 2001, 317).

My intention in this paper is to explore the effect of the relationships between people, objects and spaces in deposition and to consider the process through which things and spaces become waste. From a biographical perspective deposition can be considered to mark the end of the life of an object or of a cut feature into which material is dumped, but can also relate to the emergence or maintenance of elements of identity. In understanding depositional patterning therefore biography becomes a central theme, as we seek to understand how something came to be deposited in a particular way, or how a space came to be a focus of deposition. A useful concept in articulating this process is that of affordances, taken from the work of James Gibson (Knappett, 2005, 45-58). At a basic level an object

can afford many different things (and different things at different points in its biography), however these affordances are limited by a number of constraints, principally their material properties and the relationships which form with an object through action, which may be with a knowledgeable human, but equally an object may afford different things in different assemblages, as can be seen in Reno's (2009) study of contemporary waste. Affordances are not independent, but rather are relational, emerging in the comings together of action. The object then becomes a mediator in action, depending upon the nature of engagement it can be enacted as multiple things, being variously categorised and having, or affording, multiple effects (Mol and Law 2006). The concept of affordances therefore is important when considering deposition. Firstly, by becoming categorised as waste an object can be considered to afford nothing, other than treatment as rubbish, unless it is drawn back into action through a process of recycling or re-use whereby it may develop new affordances and, secondly, spaces or features come to afford deposition as they too reach a particular stage in their biography. Therefore, by considering how things and spaces afford waste, we can develop a more nuanced understanding of the processes through which what Garrow (2012a, 105) terms 'material culture patterning' emerges.

Drawing upon discussions of technological choice and the *chaîne opératoire*, an inherently biographical approach, in the consideration of the construction of artefacts and monuments, Jones (2003) developed the concept of 'technologies of remembrance'. In summary, this concept considers that as monuments or artefacts unfold through practice memories are evoked in certain ways, with memories being constantly produced and reproduced through action as the past becomes reinterpreted in the present (Jones 2003, 69). We can consider therefore that the process of deposition is one such course of action, in which memory is evoked and things become meaningful in relation to past practice and experience. Furthermore, if deposition can lead to deposits affording the evocation of memory, it follows that it may be effective in other ways, for example in contributing to the development of identities or senses of place. Therefore, depending upon past experience and the nature of engagement, interaction with an object or place may afford the evocation of different forms of memory, or affect participants in multiple ways. Rather than focussing on what a deposit means therefore, we can shift our focus to understand what afforded the formation of a deposit and what the broader effects of this practice were. In doing so, we can break past a dichotomy between symbolically meaningful and mundane (interpretations based around communication within a context), to explore how through deposition, all deposits developed meanings as they were enrolled in the unravelling of a context.

The Effects of Waste

In order to move from addressing the symbolism and meaning of deposits (or the processes behind them), we need to shift focus on the effect of these actions. We can begin by considering the mnemonic qualities of the middens which it has been suggested were most waste both in Hamwic and at surrounding rural sites was deposited. If we consider that Hamwic was likely peopled, in part at least, from this hinterland, the presence of middens is suggestive of the translation of rural practices into a proto-urban setting, a process which can also be seen in the ways in which pottery was produced and used in the earliest phase of Hamwic (Jervis 2011, 247). It was not the feature of the midden which was translated, but the process of middening, through which middens emerge as a means to neutralise the disruptive potential of waste. Middens do more than afford management of waste however. It can be considered that through their development and constant interaction with these features they become enrolled in technologies of remembrance, as interactions with waste and middens cited experiences in other places, and waste developed a mediatory character in this process of remembrance. Middening brought this about in two ways. Firstly, they were imposing and durable landscape features. Their properties, particularly their smell and shape, meant that they were constantly experienced, even outside of the process of deposition. Therefore, middens acted by stimulating sensory experiences, forcing people to continually interact with them and developing a mnemonic quality through the constant remaking of this relationship. Secondly, the practice of middening itself involved repeated action, the process of adding to the midden; with each action cuing memory of experience at other times and in other places, activating the latent potential agency of discarded objects to structure depositional activity, as the feature demanded further deposition in order for its neutralising role to be maintained. Midden building therefore cited rural activity, creating durable links between domestic activity in Hamwic and its rural hinterland.

Technologies of remembrance are, however, reliant on the interpretation of past experience in the present. Although mimicking rural practice, Hamwic can be considered a very different social assemblage to rural sites (Jervis 2011), and, as such, the relationships leading to the emergence of waste as a category differed. As surface deposits, middens act as a focus for materials in flux, categorised as waste, but open to the formation of new relationships, through which the material may

become re-categorised as a resource. In rural settings this material was often drawn back into action, emerging as manure, used to fertilise fields and occasionally being used in the closure of structures (see below). This was not the case in Hamwic however, as has already been discussed, Hamwic was provisioned from its rural hinterland and therefore the network of associations built through middening did not completely translate into the urban setting. Some waste material, particularly bone, was likely scavenged as a craft resource (see Morton 1992, 56 for a summary of bone working evidence; for analogy, Irish early medieval satire refers to a comb maker who scavenged bone from middens (Kelly 1988, 63)). Some material may therefore have progressed further in its biography, as a new value, as a craft resource, emerged through re-engagement. It is likely that much material was dumped outside of the settlement however, possibly into the river/sea, as at the Dutch wic site at Dorestad (Van Es and Verwers 1980). Here then, objects lay latent, middens emerged as a neutralising force, which brought order prior to material being removed from people's consciousness altogether. Therefore, whilst the process of middening allowed the urban population to continue to relate to rural communities, its effect within the social assemblage of Hamwic were very different, as it served to differentiate Hamwic from nearby rural sites, forced people to relate to waste in particular ways (therefore impacting upon their identities), and led to the material itself, on the whole, being considered as insignificant and awaiting disposal, rather than having potential and awaiting enaction as a resource. Middens were fluid features, constantly in motion, acting as a location in which the qualities and affordances of waste could be renegotiated by being drawn into particular sets of relationships with people, other objects and the wider landscape. To understand waste management it must be related to other partial connections to other zones in the messy bundle of associations which make up this social context, identifying, for example, that the agency for waste's value to not be renegotiated was located in new provisioning strategies, which fundamentally altered the relationships between people in Hamwic, foodstuffs and the land.

The development of middens therefore played a role in differentiating Hamwic as a particularly urban social assemblage, but also created a mnemonic and experiential link with its rural hinterland. Within the regional context the maintenance of boundaries is unique to Hamwic, not becoming a major feature of rural sites until the later Anglo-Saxon period (Reynolds 2003). Analysis of the filling of boundary pits (above) has demonstrated that these features only afforded deposition once they went out of use. The treatment of waste in a way which respected these boundaries was therefore central to the creation and maintenance of Hamwic's distinctly urban landscape, contrasting the continued use of middens which infused elements of rural life into the townscape. Hamwic then was more than a stage on which depositional activity occurred. Rather, this and other practices constituted it a

distinctive place, a spatially situated social assemblage or landscape (see Ingold 1993; Gregson and Rose 2000, 441; Knappett 2011, 22). The practices through which these features were filled, or kept clear of waste, did more than this however. They also served to constrain future action (Thrift 2008, 16). Boundaries functioned to separate and therefore the treatment of waste played a role in formalising social relationships within the settlement, creating social as well as physical boundaries between households, which were not materialised within rural communities. The function of these pits was to separate, the use of space within the settlement acting to formalise social relationships (see Gosden 2005, 202), yet also playing a role in creating a cohesive community who respected and enforced these boundaries. The agency to differentiate urban and rural communities and to build, maintain and structure neighbourhoods within the settlement can therefore be partially located in the treatment of waste, with repeated action serving to continually make divisions durable.

Features such as pits did not automatically afford deposition. They were enrolled in courses of action which demanded that they were *not* filled. Features such as boundaries only afforded deposition at particular times, transitional periods when the social network of Hamwic underwent considerable re-mapping. Boundaries are only meaningful if enacted as such. In the latest phase of Hamwic the settlement was re-organised. For example new pits were dug through graves in the Clifford Street area of the settlement (Morton 1992, 179; an act which can perhaps be considered a conscious act of forgetting), and, based on the ceramic assemblage, the boundary pits at Melbourne Street were closed. Therefore, the relationships through which the affordances of boundary pits emerged as spatial markers were reconfigured, meaning that as these were redundant and not enacted as boundaries, they became suitable venues for the deposition of waste. The treatment of boundary pits had served to make social relationships of division and separation in the settlement durable, but the closure of these pits dissolved these connections, contributing to a complete reconfiguration of the social as well as physical landscape of the settlement. By being deposited in these features, waste entered a new biographical phase, shifting from the transient and ambiguous state of provisional waste (for example being a component of a midden), to be redefined in relation to these pits and a broader process of change, gaining utility as filling material, actively becoming enmeshed in a broader process of change, standing for a metaphorical discarding of existing social relationships and becoming enrolled as mediators in a process of social re-assembly.

The closure of the *grubenhäus* at the south-eastern periphery, early in the life of the settlement, can also be related to a process of transition. As discussed above, recent debates in Anglo-Saxon

archaeology have considered the presence of ‘special deposits’ in Anglo-Saxon settlements. The deposit in question cannot be considered ‘special’ in the sense that the material was specifically selected for deposition. This does not, however, mean that it did not develop meaning through the act of deposition. These items can be considered to have come to stand for the process of closure; the nature of these objects was inconsequential, it was the process of filling, the building of a particular relationship between people and the abandoned structure through the medium of waste, which was important. Across northern Europe (Hamerow 2006, 22-4), *grubenhäuser* appear to have been deliberately closed, in some cases through the placement of objects or animal remains, but in others through the disposal of domestic material apparently derived from the same waste streams from which middens were built and other features closed. This feature can be considered part of a wide reaching tradition, which relates to depositional activity at nearby rural sites. As such, the material dumped in these features can be considered ‘icons of memory’ (Jones 2007, 31), providing a medium through which memory of past depositional events could be cued, through the forming of mental associations which broke down the material distinctions afforded to these objects in use. This feature dates to the earliest phase of Hamwic and, therefore, can be placed into a context of changing associations between people, the land and the material world through the laying out of a formal settlement, the growth of an urban population, the increased specialisation of craft activity and a changing relationship with surrounding rural settlements. This deposit is more than the functional closing of an abandoned feature, yet it would be wrong to see its filling as a purely ‘ritual’ act. Instead, its closure evoked memory of past events in other places, causing objects to occupy a mediatory role, with the agency to bring continuity to a process of transition, which must be considered as a complete remapping of the associations between people, landscape and the material world (see Jervis 2011), emerging through this practice. Here then we see a deposit in motion, as through action, as both the abandoned feature and the material dumped came to afford deposition, which, in the process, enacted them as icons of memory and thus mediating continuity in a changing social assemblage.

Whilst deposition in buildings and boundaries stripped their utility and caused new affordances to develop in a linear manner, other features came to afford deposition more episodically (for example when a cess pit needed relining or when a quarry pit had become exhausted). We can deconstruct this process and consider how the utility of waste material as well as the re-categorisation of the pit itself emerged. Whilst operating as a cess pit, waste would be disordering, hindering the ability for people to engage with this feature in the intended way. Eventually however the pit would act upon people, the smell of human waste would become overwhelming and the pit may attract pests. The pit then, temporarily, afforded deposition and transient, provisional waste developed a role as filling material to

seal the cess deposits. Once this episode was complete, the pit lost its affordances, as it once again became desirable for the pit to be kept clear of waste. The meaning of the pit and the waste emerged relationally and were fluid, emerging episodically through a particular set of relationships between people and their material surroundings, with the pit only affording deposition which would close it once it ceased to be enacted as a cess pit.

So far, the discussion has focussed on the affordances of features as foci of deposition. We can consider how the material itself came to afford disposal and how waste was perceived in Hamwic. On the whole, waste occupied a transient position on middens, only being deposited when a feature demanded closure as it became disruptive itself. Although some may have been recycled for craft activities, it appears that, unlike in the countryside, waste was not recycled on the fields. The development of middens suggests a level of conservativeness, keeping waste as a provisional presence in a neutral state, acknowledging its potential as a resource in the future, rather than it coming to be identified as disposable. With this in mind, the large deposit from close to St Mary's Church, discussed above, stands out as unusual. Based on the presence of a cessy deposit at its base, this pit was initially dug as a cess pit, before being quickly backfilled with secondary waste and some re-deposited material. This material appears to represent waste from a feast or similar large scale consumption event, and, on the basis of its location close to St Mary's Church, it is tempting to relate this to a religious celebration. Religious events happen cyclically, on a different timescale to the daily ebb and flow through which the majority of waste was created. Broken pottery and food remains came to be categorised as waste, just as in a domestic setting, but rather than this cuing deposition in a midden, it became disruptive as it occurred outside of a usual process of waste management. In this light, secondary deposition allowed the waste to be neutralised, perhaps also causing an emergent utility in the filling of a feature dug in association with this event. This deposit emerged as a re-stabilising influence, restoring normality by removing a disordering presence. Parallels can perhaps be drawn with the way that today we quickly clear up traces of religious festivals such as Christmas, as if left to linger too long the material culture associated with these events becomes disruptive. Rather than being enmeshed in a process of remembering, this action can be framed as careful forgetting, focussed on the quick and structured removal of waste, rather than allowing them to linger in the domestic sphere through inclusion in domestic deposits (Edensor 2005; Knappett 2011 200-1). It can therefore be concluded that the value of waste emerged through its mnemonic qualities, as the transition from rural to urban maintained a lingering sense that waste could develop utility. Whilst typically it seems that waste was left to linger in middens for long periods of time in a controlled manner, acknowledging its potential to be of use, in some circumstances it seems that this may have

been undesirable. Certain objects may cue memory of specific events or by the associations they carry with them be disruptive (the potent afterlife discussed by Thrift (2008, 9)). It seems that for waste associated with particular events, which occurred outside of the rhythms of daily life, it was deemed more appropriate to neutralise the potential for re-engagement through quick deposition.

Conclusions

The aim of this contribution has been to develop further a number of the points raised in relation to Garrow's (2012a; 2012b) discussion of 'odd deposits'. The approach proposed is a departure from considerations of the symbolic meaning of deposits or a consideration of odd/special and normal/mundane, whether considered as different ends of a spectrum or discrete opposites. Rather, following Garrow (2012b), the concept of biography is introduced and the process through which meaning emerges in the process of deposition forms the central element of this analysis. By introducing the concept of affordances to the discussion it has been possible to think about how patterning in material culture relates to the entangled biographies of features and the material deposited into them. Rather than focussing on these deposits having some symbolic meaning, the concept of technologies of remembrance has been introduced, along with insights from relational approaches within archaeology and other disciplines, to consider the effect of deposition, as a mnemonic act, but also as a component of a wider bundle of connections and associations which constitute people (for example by mediating the development of forms of urban identity), places and objects. Through the application of this approach to deposition in the early medieval settlement of Hamwic, it has been argued that deposition was enrolled in the process of transition from rural to urban living, and that the process of middening mediated continuity in the face of change through its mnemonic qualities. The temporality of deposition has also been addressed, with some deposits being linked to processes of transition, others being filled in a more cyclical manner and a small number of deposits appearing to relate to neutralising the disruptive effects of a discrete event. As Garrow (2012a, 115) states patterning should not be read as a meaningful text, but as the residue of past action, with deposits becoming meaningful through practice (Garrow 2012b, 137). By conceptualising this action as the formation and dissolution of social relationships, and acknowledging through the concept of biography and the development of affordances that meanings are emergent, multiple and unstable, we can consider that objects and

deposits do not have a single meaning, but rather were effective, as they contributed to the development of multiple identities and social realities, the processes of life in the past that archaeology seeks to understand.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1: A) The location of Hamwic in southern England. B) The location of sites in Hamwic (those mentioned in the text are shaded in grey).

Figure 2: Section of a cess pit at SOU6 (redrawn from Holdsworth 1980).

Figure 3: A) Plan showing the presence of cross-fits at SOU4 (redrawn from Holdsworth 1980). B) Scatter plot comparing the average sherd weight and sherd count of pits at SOU4.

Figure 4: Section of the grubenhäus at SOU11 (redrawn from Morton 1992).

Figure 5 : Section of Pit 8 at SOU33 (redrawn from Morton 1992).

Biographical Note

Dr Ben Jervis obtained his PhD from the University of Southampton in 2011. His doctoral research examined the social role of pottery in medieval Southampton within a relational framework. He has published widely on the application of such approaches to medieval pottery, including papers in *The Journal of Social Archaeology*, *Early Medieval Europe* and *Medieval Archaeology*. He has a particular interest in the study of depositional practices and new research is exploring the interdisciplinary relationship between history and archaeology. He is the editor of *Make-do and Mend: Archaeologies of Compromise, Repair and Re-Use* (with Alison Kyle; Archaeopress 2012) and his first monograph, *Pottery and Social Life in Medieval England: Towards a Relational Approach*, will be published with Oxbow in 2014. He has previously worked as a research associate at University College London, The University of Cambridge and The University of Southampton. He currently works for English Heritage as Assistant Inspector of Ancient Monuments in London, and is an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London, where he has previously lectured.

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² All archaeological excavations in Southampton are referred to by a sequential number, prefixed by the letters SOU.